

Harpswell Community Garden Report January 15, 2016

SUMMARY OF 2015 GARDEN PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

Infrastructure

Our focus this year was on developing our garden area for shared use and the Common Garden. We built a raised bed near the garden entry for an herb garden to be accessed by all gardeners. We also added soil/compost to elevate and provide better soil for a 20 by 60 foot Common Garden area. We also built several Huglekulture, raised soil areas with a brush/wood understory, to improve aeration and add organic matter to the gardens. These first few hugels proved to be too small to be productive so five Bowdoin student volunteers expanded the hugels, increasing their size and surface area. We are looking forward to seeing how well the improved hugels perform next season as part of the Common Garden area.



Volunteers Building Hugles

Outreach

Cristine Bachor, approved by HHLT as our Communications Outreach Coordinator, worked part-time, April through October. Cristine wrote a monthly newsletter for the HCG and sent it via email to the garden newsletter list. The newsletter included updates on Garden activities, gardening information and tips, local events, and recruited volunteers for workdays. She also maintained our presence on the Town website and Recreation Facebook page.

Committee members Judith Stanton and Kara Douglas submitted articles to the Harpswell Anchor, updating the community about HCG activities and garden-related issues of significance. Topics included: Pollinator Supportive Gardening; 'Huglekulture,' Beekeeping, and Gardening for the Common Good project.

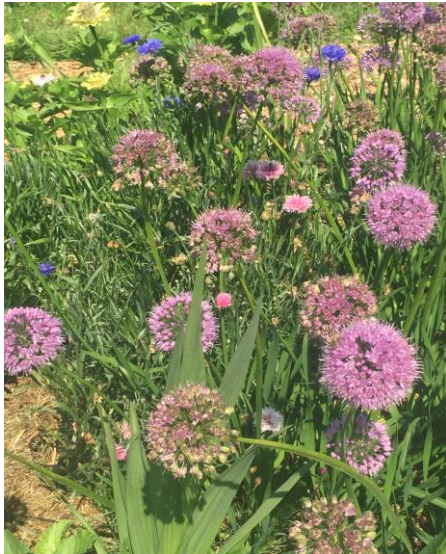
Relationships with Harpswell Coastal Academy, Bowdoin College Common Good Day volunteers, Mid-Coast Hunger Prevention Project, Harpswell Heritage Apples, and other community groups continued this season.

Gardens & Gardeners

Eleven gardeners rented 16 plots this year. In comparison, in 2014, 13 gardeners rented 20 plots. In 2013, 15 gardeners rented 18 plots. One committee member/gardener planted a Pollinator Demonstration Garden; the remaining plots were put into "Common Garden" production. HCA occupied two garden plots this year (3 in 2014), but with its own garden on Rt. 123, they do not expect to use plots at the Community Garden in future years.

We gave individual orientations to the new gardeners in the spring/early summer. A number of the gardeners enjoyed a late

summer potluck dinner featuring produce from their gardens



Pollinator Garden -- Allium

Soil and Water Issues

We continue to amend the soil with organic compost and amendments as recommended by the state soil testing service and are seeing substantial improvements in the rental plots over the three years we have been operating. However, the large “Common Garden” plot requires additional soil development to be sufficiently productive. Water demands for the common garden and rental plots exceeded our supply in August. The well almost ran dry and gardeners had to bring in their own water. And with limited water pressure at the garden tap significant labor goes into irrigating by hand.

Orchard

Robert McIntyre planted two more heritage apple trees, bringing the orchard total to 8 trees. He added a Naked Limb Greening and a Gloria Mundi. The other varieties include: Belle de Boskoop, Black Oxford, Canadian Strawberry, Harpswell Firehouse,

Wolf River, Kavanagh, Harpswell Baldwin, and Norton Greening.

Robert continued maintaining the 8 apple trees at the garden. The trees are doing well; the more mature produced a few apples, but unfortunately, someone picked them before they could mature.

“Gardening for the Common Good” Project.

Two HCA interns worked with our expert and Master Gardeners to plant, maintain, and harvest the Common Garden. Cyndy Bush and Jane Covey worked with the student interns weekly, teaching them gardening skills and overseeing their work. Mary Ruckinskas designed the gardens following consultation with Mid-Coast Hunger Prevention Program to produce food that they especially need. She also contributed significantly to helping plant and maintain the garden. Other volunteers assisted with maintenance and harvesting. The produce from the Common Garden, donated to the Mid-Coast Hunger Prevention Program, ended up totaling just over 1000 pounds!



Duncan Mains, Intern

We consider this pilot project successful and within our volunteer capacity and so plan to continue it in the coming year. With ‘lessons learned’ and additional investment

in the soil and water system we expect it to be more productive.

Review of the Common Garden activities suggests we need to seek greater efficiency in operations – for example, planting fewer crops and consolidating harvests and deliveries. Further investment in soil enhancement and irrigation should enable greater productivity.

Three outside groups awarded \$1485 to support this project: The Cumberland County Master Gardener Association Norm Steele Memorial Seed Grant Projects; UMaine Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Development Fund and the New England Grassroots Environment Fund.

Workshops/Community Outreach:

We offered two workshops previously popular with our gardeners and community members. Robert McIntyre gave an apple-grafting workshop and Judith Stanton organized and led a Beekeeping Workshop with fellow beekeepers.

SUMMARY OF 2015 GOALS:

Completed Goals:

- Raised soil and amended the common garden area
- Pilot tested youth involvement program, 'Gardening for the Common Good'
- Managed weed growth in fallow area.
- Developed one demonstration garden

Partially Completed Goals:

- Make compost areas operational (small area done; large area still to be developed)

- Partner with other community groups to offer education/outreach (no joint workshops were presented)
- Level lawn and orchard areas (filling in with weed waste)

PRELIMINARY 2016 GOALS

At our end of season meeting, the committee assessed this year's programs and brainstormed how we might continue and improve our programs in the coming year. Highlights from that discussion include:

Community Garden Role and Vision:

What is the most appropriate role for the Harpswell Community Garden? As a rural community, Harpswell does not fit the typical profile for a community garden since most people in Harpswell who garden do so on their own property. The garden is not easily accessible for residents of Orrs, Baileys and Cundy Harbor areas; indeed, most Community Gardeners live on Harpswell Neck with a few residing on Great Island. If there is a limited demand for garden plots; what other programs might be relevant to our community? Should we actively recruit gardeners from Brunswick and Topsham?

We know that we are the 'oldest' town of our size in Maine and a significant number of town residents are food insecure. How might the Community Garden (perhaps in collaboration with other organizations) serve these residents? We know that the regional food pantry welcomes contributions from our garden, but we do not know how many Harpswell residents benefit as transportation and other barriers may limit access to the Brunswick facility.

How might we enhance the garden experience, raise our visibility and attract more residents in need of garden space to the garden? We suspect that many may not be aware of the garden or the benefits of growing one's own organic food. As more people use Mitchell Field for recreation we might attract more gardeners through events and greater visibility.

In the short term we expect to:

- Increase our outreach – public information efforts with a new brochure, community calendar postings, Harpswell TV
- Consult with community groups, leaders and others to identify and assess roles and programs responsive to community needs and desires in both gardening and food security arenas.
- Develop a longer term vision for the Community Garden

Infrastructure Enhancement

Expanding our garden area to include the Common Garden challenged our water system. In this relatively dry summer our well almost ran dry as a result. We will investigate options for expanding water access and irrigation of the garden areas and seek resources to improve it in 2016.

Gardener amenities are limited. The garden lacks shade for gardeners to take a break from the sun and borrowing waterfront picnic tables is more difficult as recreational usage increases. . In 2016 we would like to add these amenities to the garden.

We also need to improve signage and our on-site information kiosk.

Finally, we need to continue to improve the soil in the common garden area with compost and other amendments.

Further Develop Gardening for the Common Good Project:

Our experience in this first year encourages us to continue the project with some changes. We will open the internships up to all Harpswell high school youth while exploring the possibility of a college age intern. Because Harpswell Coastal Academy has its own garden site for educational and community service and its numbers are limited, we believe that a broader reach is appropriate. We will also include more informal educational opportunities that directly contribute to the garden such as journaling weather, garden conditions and pests; weighing and recording individual crop harvests.

We also hope to offer Common Garden volunteer opportunities to others in the community on a casual or more structured basis.



Common Garden Harvest

The Harpswell Community Garden appreciates the contributions of the following people and organizations during the 2015 Season

**Partial Listing of Groups and Individuals
Who Have Volunteered at the Harpswell
Community Garden**

Bowdoin Students
Dave Brown
Cyndy Bush
Dave Chipman
Jane Covey
Kara Douglas
Sam Gatchell
Alyssa Grupp
Robert McIntyre
Duncan Mains and family
Peg and Don Newburg and family
Jamie Pacheco and family
Mary Ann Roark
Michael O'Brien
Mary Rukiinskaskas
Faye Scheren
Judith Stanton
Paul Weeden
Nate Wildes

**Partial Listing of Businesses and
Organizations Who Have Donated
Materials, Services and Funds**

Agren Appliance
Beekeepers
 Jennifer Nadeau
 Doc Phillips
 Georgia Rock
Brooks Farm and Feed
Coastal Landscaping
Cumberland County Master Gardener
Association Norm Steele Memorial Seed
Grant Projects;
UMaine Cooperative Extension Master
Gardener Development Fund
New England Grassroots Environment
Fund.
Harpswell Garden Club
Harpswell Heritage Land Trust
Helen Norton
Lowe's
Robert McIntyre
Skillins Nursery
Vail Tree Service

Harpswell Community Garden 2015 Budget Report

	Operating	Operating	Common	Common	Total	Total
	Budget	Actual	Good Budget	Good Actual	Budget	Actual
Funds Available:						
HHLT 2015 and other Grant Awards	1050	1375	2100	1485	3150	2860
(7) 2015 Rental Income			500	445		445
Cash Contributions	100	150			100	150
Total Funds Available	1150	1525	2600	1930	3750	3455
Expenses:						
Student Internships (2)			1100	982	1100	982
Tools/Equipment						0
Riding/Hand Mower	300	402			300	402
WeedWhacker/brush attachment	250	250			250	250
Garden Preparation/		401			0	401
Maintenance						0
(18) Peat Moss			100		100	0
Soil/ Compost Delivered	75		725	430	800	430
Soil Amendments	50		100		150	0
Other						0
Plant Material/seeds	25	28	75	75	100	103
Soil Test (4 areas)	40	15			40	15
(24) Mulch/Garden Stakes	50	54			50	54
Fuel for Mowers	60	28			60	28
(26) Apple Trees	0	227			0	227
(27) Outreach/Education Materials	300	70			300	70
(28)Volunteer Support and Recognition	75				75	0
Orchard/Garden Drainage						0
Total Town Administered Funds:	1150	1475	2100	1487	3250	2962
(31) Balance		50		443		493
Grant funds outside Town Admin				500		

Reserve Funds:

Net Rental Income/Donations

2015 Income/Donations 493

2012-2014 Total Reserve Funds 1495

2012-2015 Total Reserve Funds 1988

Notes to 2015 Budget

Operating Budget

Line 18-24 - materials primarily for Common Garden

Line 26 two trees not budgeted

line 27,28 Low spend on Communications/Volunteer

Project Budget

Line 7 - Accepted 3 interns so applied rental income to project -- one dropped out.

Line 32 - one donor preferred to pay vendor directly

